STORIES OF ALL SORTS FOR ALL PEOPLE.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 322. FOR WEEK ENDING MARCH 2, 1895. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

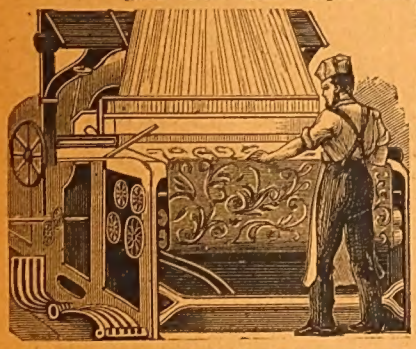
IF YOU INTEND TO BUY

Buy New Carpets at the Price of Old.

It would be ridiculous to buy old carpets, old designs, shop-worn, out-of-date goods, when you can purchase a stylish GENUINE, WOVEN, REVERSIBLE TRIUMPH CARPET suitable for Drawing-room, Dining-room, Bedroom, etc., for

4/- Each. 4s. Postal Order or 50 Stamps, **4/- Each.**

handsomely bordered and woven in fifty different patterns and colourings, to suit all requirements, and LARGE ENOUGH TO COVER ANY ORDINARY-SIZED ROOM. These Carpets will be sold as an advertisement for the goods of the British Carpet Weaving Company, below the actual cost of production. Thousands have already been sold at almost double above prices.



With every carpet we shall supply a very handsome Rug to match, for 1s. 3d. extra.

SPECIAL OFFER—Two Carpets and Two Rugs for 9s. 6d.; Four Carpets and Four Rugs for 18s.; Eight Carpets and Eight Rugs for 35s.

Money willingly returned if not approved.

The *Queen* says: "Decidedly stouter and handsomer than any of the kind, the price being the astounding part of the matter." *Schoolmistress:* "For style, durability, and cheapness they cannot be beaten." *Penny Illustrated Paper:* "Manufactured in every variety of colour, and is one of the most surprising bargains I have seen." *Church Bells:* "Truly wonderful value."

Hundreds of unsolicited testimonials are being received from delighted purchasers who have had these carpets in use for years.

Stafford Road Post Office, Wolverhampton. M. A. Dudley, writes:—"Having purchased two of your Carpets between three and four years ago, I am thoroughly satisfied, and have recommended them to several people, who I know have tried them, and are equally satisfied."

65, Abbey Street, Nuneaton, Warwickshire. "Mrs. Bostock will thank the British Carpet Weaving Co. to send her one of their Carpets, for which she encloses postal order. She has had one of these Carpets in constant wear for some years now, and finds it the best wearing and cheapest carpet she can get."

Do not miss this opportunity, it may not occur again.

CARPET ORDER FORM.
On receipt of this order form, and Postal Order or stamps, we guarantee to send any goods, as above, to your address in any part of the United Kingdom. Money returned if not approved.
(Signed) THE BRITISH CARPET WEAVING CO.

All orders despatched in rotation same day as received. Cheques and Postal orders to be made payable to J. HARGREAVES, Secretary, and crossed "UNION BANK." Address—

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WHITE ENAMELLED COPPER LETTERS
(Highest Award, Paris Exhibition), for
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Agents Wanted.

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and a Lovely Complexion, clear as alabaster, immediately produced by one box of our ARSENIC AND IRON PILLS, no matter how pale or bad your complexion may be at present. Price per large box, post free 2s. 9d., from—

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Warranted perfectly harmless.

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Please mention this paper.

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COCOA

BOILING WATER OR MILK.

"WORTH A GUINEA A BOX."

BEECHAM'S PILLS

FOR ALL

BILIOUS & NERVOUS DISORDERS,

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Full particulars will be gladly forwarded to any lady on receipt of addressed envelope.
Write privately to—
Mrs. P. S. S.,
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QUICKLY CORRECT ALL IRREGULARITIES, REMOVE ALL OBSTRUCTIONS and RELIEVE the distressing SYMPTOMS so prevalent with the sex. Boxes 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d. (the latter size contains three times the quantity), of all Chemists, or will be sent anywhere on receipt of 15 or 34 stamps, by the maker,

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The most powerful and effective on earth.

For the most obstinate cases. Will not injure the most delicate. Price 7s. 6d. (Strongest, 11s. per bottle); post free, 6d. extra. HERBAL INSTITUTE, 1a, Hackney Road (opposite Shoreditch Church), London, N.E. Send at once stamped directed envelope for particulars and proofs. I will forfeit £100 for every testimonial that is not genuine, and they can be seen at any time.

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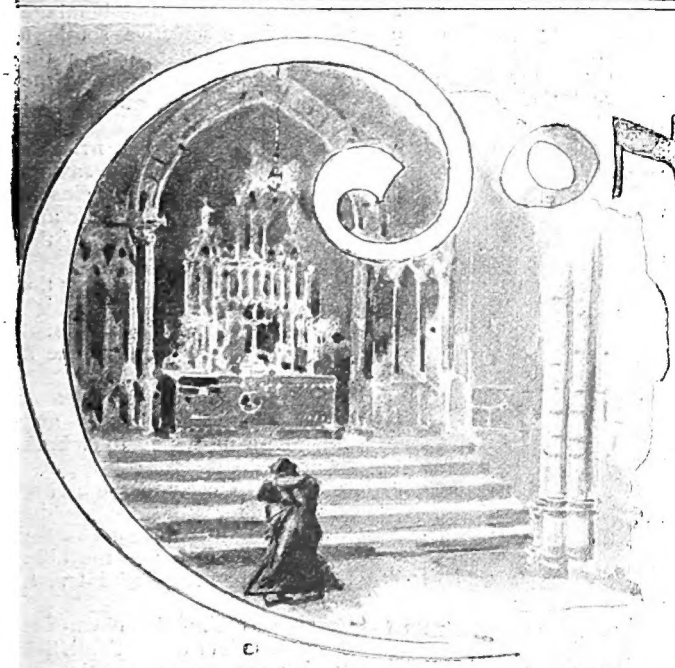
EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 322.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING MARCH 2, 1895.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.



CONSECRATED TO LOVE

THAT quaint little edifice half hidden in the over-hanging elms? It is a chapel, monsieur. Ah, it is indeed a strange place for a house of worship; but no one has knelt there these many, many years, and, in fact, only one person ever worshipped within the gloomy pile, and that one, stranger still, but once.

Yet, my friend, that person had most excellent reasons for building that little temple upon that very spot, of the sombre grey brick of the valley-kilns, even from the little that I know. Some there are who build chapels, actuated by a spirit of religious sentiment; some to expiate a crime; some to satisfy a species of egotism, perhaps; but never was temple consecrated in the manner of this one—no, not in all the chronicles of ages. It perpetuates the thrilling history of a most strange and tragic love.

I was a lad of sixteen when I entered the service of General Count de Barde, of the Third Battalion, on his vast estates which, in 1809, included almost the whole of the north valley of the Seine from the suburbs of Paris to the pretty Gothic village of Meaux yonder.

My father was a Corsican and a patriot, a worshipper of his countryman, the great Bonaparte, who had rendered the General life-long aid in his accumulation of power; and when, in 1807, he was killed by the falling of a tree, after having saved the General's life only to lose his own, it was understood that I was to be trained to assume control of at least a part of this perfect provincial system, and to manage exclusively the mammoth brick kiln which stood in the identical spot where now stands the consecrated chapel yonder, surrounded by the same hand-clasped and patriarchal trees.

Over the tree-tops beyond, monsieur, you notice the grand old ruin on the summit of the hill. It was the château of the General, and a marvel of beauty it was in those days to the thousands who came even from Paris to admire it, and to partake of sumptuous hospitality which ever resembled a sort of all-year fête. Ah, what stirring times were those, my friend! From that grand old ruin down to this solitary little chapel in the valley an invisible chain of history hangs, every link of which incloses a human passion, a deep and varied experience.

What an imposing figure to all this pageant of reminiscence. The Emperor admired, and the valley folk adored him. Perhaps it was the sterling integrity of his nature, and the deep sense of justice that actuated his deeds, and gave nobility to his patriotism.

Long and multiplying prosperity, too, gave the General courage, his great good heart instinct with the chivalry of a true soldier. Of his vast army of valley-folk workers, either in his vineyards, pottery works, or about the great brick kilns, not one but enjoyed his personal interest.

The firing of these kilns was a tri-yearly event of moment, and in this open clearing about the kilns the General would have his twenty long tables brought down from the château, loading them with viands, and every man, woman, or child that had the least hand in his enterprises was bidden to the feast. A cask of choice vintage was offered up in pleasant sacrifice, and at the July fête an ox was roasted whole. What a vivid memory of the valley monarch, we who knew him, retained!

I can see him yonder now—that tall, dark, human thunder-bolt, with heart as tender as a child's, with a voice that made women quaver, and children cry with fear, yet capable of softest modulation—stalking down the narrow aisles between the broad, laden and garlanded tables, lighted by a hundred torches, scanning the faces that not one of his great family be missing, not an impostor thrust into their midst.

It was in the late spring of 1808 that the General, returning from his annual visit to the home of his childhood, in the Hautes Pyrénées, brought back with him his young wife, some twenty years his junior, to rule with him the fortunes of "Halloc," the château yonder.

The valley went wild with joy, and for many days there was open feasting in the great halls of the mansion, and scenes of festivity followed, rivalling the splendours of the court of Hadrian. Paris was drunken with the success of her idol, over whom the Fates seemed to hover, showering bounty upon bounty and victory upon victory upon him

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Like a child did she follow her mountain lord.

The General's young wife was like a wild gazelle brought from the forests to be the ruling spirit of this palace of luxury. She was the most perfect example of what the pure southern soils and clear mountain atmosphere, as well as the surroundings of tradition and romance, produce after generations of development.

She was not beautiful; she was more. One forgot mere beauty in the strange spell which her mere presence inspired in the northern heart; small of figure, yet so straight and commanding, that she gave the illusion of stature, with a cheek that shone with a mellow light like ripe fruit of the tropics, shoulders of classic modelling in the Oriental luxuriousness of the Empire gown, with a seeming transparency in their dimpled roundness, she bore the elegance of high birth and breeding, yet that eloquent simplicity of the peasant to whom tradition is more than history, poetry and song more than philosophy and fact.

The General adored her—as did all those who knew her. But, victim ever of that indomitable conceit which had hitherto conquered all, he had led himself into the belief that she in turn loved him, which, my friend, I deplore as a deep and deadly blunder into which snare no younger doting lover could have fallen. What sweet but fatal illusions will not possess the minds of men of five-and-fifty when they themselves are the captives of an all-encompassing passion?

It did not require the wisdom of prophets to perceive that though present in the flesh the soul was absent upon hourly long journeys back to the Franco-Spanish province, lighted by southern stars and swept by the soft perfumed winds of the semi-tropic land of rich dreams and rapturous love. As she sat before the spinet it would not take a spirit of magic to divine that those dreamful eyes looked quite over the head of the great General and found repose in the embrace of a wild dark spirit of some Spanish hero, the complement of her inner life.

But soon came matters of national moment requiring the General's presence in the ranks. Until the departure of the great valley-monarch we were inclined to treat the glories of Napoleon as affairs of an abstract nature which lay far beyond our orbit, as it were. But when the big soldier mounted his bay gelding, and, attended by his saluting aides, passed down the valley of the Seine towards Paris, followed by shouting hundreds on foot and on horse, the national strife was brought to our own doorsteps.

I remember well the parting between the General and his young wife on that memorable May evening, after they had watched the twilight fading from the terrace, promenading up and down in deepest consultation.

Ah, she was beautiful then in the flush of fear and the wonder of parting! A soft Persian shawl fell back from her white shoulders, and her head was crowned with a sort of classic garland—simplicity regaining favour again after the barbarian prodigality of the Creole queen had exhausted all human caprices.

And like a child did she follow her mounted lord down the hillside, clinging to the sword presented to him by the Emperor, and endeavouring loyally to cheer her chief; and between yonder crumbling monoliths, which were then the side-posts of an imperial gateway, the big soldier bent down and kissed her twice upon the forehead, whereupon in speechless eloquence of emotion the little sibyl turned and fled back to the terrace again.

With the General's going it seemed that a glory had passed from the earth leaving a sense of oppression and bondage behind. Driven into the fortress of the sensitive southern temperament, the beautiful mistress of the château upon the hill became a creature of sensations once more, living in the past and the dream-life of the present, which was all but perfect, all but happiness.

For days a melancholy possessed her, and her irritable temper brought us all into humble subjection; but the savage came to the surface, and solitude, that, following so closely upon these unremittent festivities, was once burdensome and *ennuyeuse*, now became a joy, and she felt the liberty of the solitary mountain bird, a creature of the upper air.

It was three months to a day that, as I was arranging the final preliminaries for lighting the great kiln—which momentous event was to follow the night after with the usual fête, a young man entered the open space yonder, like a wayfarer who had lost his way.

Alone, and not a little genial with the thought of the morrow, I hailed him. He said that he had come a long distance, and was making his way to the north, where he hoped to embark for America in search of new fortunes.

A forlorn blue coat was buttoned up closely to the bronze neck, and his trousers were tied about him with thongs, while his slime-oozing boots left a footprint like that of a panther upon the polished clay floor of the clearing before the kiln. But there was somewhat in the face that inspired interest, almost awe.

"You are from the south," said I, noting the clean-cut, mobile features, like a cameo of a troubadour cut in South Sea shell, and the peculiar accent which denotes the contiguous provinces to Spain.

"You are clever," said he, dropping his eyes; then recovering, "is yonder the château of Madame la Comtesse de Barde?"

"Yes. I am her aide during the absence of the General."

"Indeed!" The word was spoken almost with agitation. "You will take a message to her from me?" He was drawing forth a twisted handkerchief, which spilled out one or two pieces of gold as he untied it with trembling fingers.

"You insult me, monsieur," I said. "If Madame la Comtesse knows you I will take a message without hire, for I see that you are in need."

The stranger nodded as if the need were indeed more than matters of hunger and thirst; then wrote a few lines, intrusting them to me. "I will wait here till you return," he said.

As I reached the grand terrace Madame la Comtesse was just alighting from her black charger, and was rifling her pocket for a bon-bon to reward her faithful animal after her evening jaunt down the valley.

The reading of that simple message.

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With the reading of that simple message—once, twice, thrice—and with a tumult of misgivings in her heart, the beautiful woman turned upon me, venturing a question which only broke into a faint choking cry.

For a moment the fluttering heart seemed solving a great problem; and turning her eyes in the direction of the sun that left great trains of gorgeous cloud right over the most favoured capital of the civilised world, as if to gather light into the darkness of a doubting, hesitating soul, a sort of prayer escaped the quivering lips; and then without a spoken word she remounted the black horse, and spurred him down the arch of overhanging lindens, in the direction of the kilns.

I stood still a moment in amazement, a feeling of guilt entered my heart, though my crime had been but the prompting of a pure thought. At last I perceived the hidden significance of that silent living drama acted with such tragic earnestness by one who was her sole audience all these weeks.

Suddenly a light touch at my side, and I looked up. The groom was standing with eyes fixed upon the distance, his hand pointing down the valley road beside the gleaming Seine, which threaded the dark green vale like a ribbon of silver through an altar-cloth. Three mounted figures were approaching, the sight of the forward one starting the blood to my temples. It was he General.

Instantly I turned, and fled down the narrow defile which was a short path to the kilns, so familiar to me. It seemed that some calamity impended, though I could not guess more than to realise the General's disappointment, on his sudden coming, at not finding the Countess to greet him.

As I neared the kilns I slackened my pace from mere exhaustion. I had crept close to the kiln-clearing on the opposite side from the road entrance, when the noise of the ponderous trappings, and the tread of the heavy charger coming down the hill, drove me to quick action. But the shadows deepened, and my way became more difficult; and as I stealthily approached the clearing I saw that I was too late.

Pausing an instant, there, I heard a whisper in the stillness, and, strange to say, the iron door of the great kiln close and latch, followed by the shuffle of feet, as of some one dancing on one foot with hasty mounting. Then I crept even to the edge just as the silhouette of the tall soldier appeared in the open space, and there met the wife seated imperiously, like an apparition in grey, against the sombre shadows.

With a faint cry of forced surprise, the little woman reined up, and greeted her lord; but with a kiss and a wave of the hand he sped past her, silencing her with a gleaming look. Then the warrior stopped, dismounted, drew his sword, and advanced towards the great kiln-door.

"Stop!" The cry was like the scream of a wounded animal.

The General turned: "You have someone locked in there," he said.

"How dare you?" A cut of the whip and the black charger dashed up broadside to the great door. The tall warrior stood still, folding his arms. There was a smile upon his lips as he said: "Dare you look me in the eyes and tell me that you did not just now conceal someone in there from me?"

"I dare!"

"Then——you lie! I will prove that you lie——"

"One moment!" The soldier halted.

"What are you going to do?"

"To prove that you have lied, and then kill the proof!" The utterance was calm—tragically calm.

"One moment!" and the little woman waved a glistening weapon into the air. Then, holding the weapon above her, she said calmly, "If you open that door and find no one there, before God, I shall plunge this into my heart—choose, Monsieur!"

Whether held by the fascination of those low-spoken words, or stopped by the realisation that be there a lover within or no lover, the fate of his happiness were the same, I can only wonder. But, acknowledging his defeat, the General drew his helmet and advanced to his conqueror. "My love," he said, "my life is yours. As I love you, so do I believe in you. Lay your hand upon this sword and swear that you are faithful to me!" The slender hand shot out, grasping the sword-hilt, while he clasped his palms around it. "Before God, I am true!" the voice betrayed no tremour of fear.

"You have someone locked in there."

Then the great soldier reached forward, clasping his loved one to him with a thousand prayers for forgiveness, and a thousand pledges of confidence. "How could I have been so mad as to doubt you—you who are the light, the joy, the heaven of a soldier's life, for whom I hope, fight, and pray God to endure?"

But, alas, my friend, the sword went not back into the sheath as the dagger had done, nor in his ravings did once those restless eyes leave that iron door. "Ho! ho! my lads," he bellowed with wild laughter. "Mecklin! Burse! de Freynet! The firing was for to-morrow night; no—it shall be to-night in my honour. Halloo!"

Halloo! Halloo! rolled the echo down the valley, and at sound of that familiar call, like the trump of doom,

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came the tramp of feet from all directions, and a dozen astonished faces burst into the now moonlit space. "It is I—the General! go; call the men—their wives—their children. We shall have the crown fête of the year in honour of Napoleon and his braves! Quick—you, D'Acre! Go to the château, and tell them to bring the wine, the supper, the tables, the torches! Go! And you to the valley-folk, Martin! and let not one disappoint me, for I have but till daybreak when I am off for the Alps!"

Then, leaping like a school-boy up to the silent figure upon the coal-black charger, "Mon Dieu! This is the happiest day of my life, my love! What a fool—a criminal, was I to suspect her whom I so love! But I repent—ah, I will prove to you how loyally I repent. Napoleon has taken Ratisbon, Vienna is bombarded, Rome is seized, the Archduke Charles a prisoner at Essling, Beauharnais and Marmont on the way to join the victor, themselves triumphant, to share the spoils of war, and we follow.

"You shall see how I prove my repentance, my love, you shall be the wife of one of the crowned pillars of the Empire. But first let us make merry. Halloo! Work, sluggards, work! I must be off at daybreak!"

It seemed less than a minute before the valley was alive with people. The rumble of laden waggons, the shouts of the heralds, the roll-beat of drums, seemed to madden the great commander, and his heavy raillery became unintelligible. Now it was a command to his regiment; now a wild camp-song; now an insane jargon trembling with pathos, but that sword—ah, monsieur, never once went it back for an instant at his side, nor those eyes for an instant wandering from that great kiln-door.

Only once did he forget himself, and in that sudden interval a hand darted forward from the watchful woman's bosom, and into the little peep-hole of the kiln the sheathed dagger sped, and then like one who leaves a place of martyrdom she spurred to the edge of the clearing, turned about and waited.

For the next half-hour poured in from every direction whole families, crowds of shouting boys and girls, bands of music, and the General leaped about like a clumsy bear drunken on grapes.

For an hour it seemed, though it was not so long, the tumult of the fête ran riot; the children had made wreaths of oak and beech, and taking advantage of the monarch's unbending, had climbed to his shoulders, crowning him with garlands of green. Then suddenly, in the midst of these shoutings and commands, these songs drowned in a roar of merriment, the shrill pipe of peasant flutes and the roar of drums, the crowned symposiarch ordered oil to be poured into the fuel of the kiln, and snatching a firebrand, he advanced.

A wild shout went up, and every one stood on tiptoe. Without even a glance at the marble statue upon her living pedestal of sleek black, with his sword in his right and the torch in his left hand lighting up his face with a halo of demonry, he thrust the brand into the fuel and drew back with his hands raised to heaven.

A white tongue of flame shot into the air, lighting the furrowed faces of the peasant toilers with a ghastly pallor, throwing into hard relief against the shadows that mounted apparition at the clearing's edge, poised like a lioness at bay, from whose bitten lips two little drops of blood had trickled down upon the chin.

Suddenly one of the mounted aides dashed from the thicket, his horse rearing, blinded, with the sudden light. With a salute, he thrust a message into his chief's hand. "The rumour was not sustained," he said. "Napoleon was routed at Aspern, and is driven to the Isle of Loban. Twenty thousand men to the front, with you in command, at daybreak!"

The General turned stiffly, clenching his hands. "My horse!" he murmured to me, who was now at his side. Then he mounted in silence unutterable, and for the first in all this time sheathed his sword, as he bent down to me, and without so much as a glance at the imperial figure in grey, like a statue of a saint in some forgotten niche, he spoke in the voice of the grave, "Tell her!" Then he dug the spurs into the charger's flanks, and plunged into the darkness.

I turned to her. That head, so long up-poised like the heroic martyr, had fallen slightly forward, and the hands were lifting heavenward; then, ere I could reach her side, the white figure toppled headlong to the ground with a strange sound. Twenty-one days from that eventful night, my friend, General Comte de Barde, lay upon the field of Wagram, with a bullet in his heart!

It was quite a month after the fall of my hero that I saw his widow again, and then it was here in this very spot. As she dismounted from the same faithful gelding, I noticed that her raven hair was streaked with grey; but there was that same calm, impenetrable glance, that firm mouth, and the chin of a tigress, with eyes so eloquent of that nameless power which we know not whether to ascribe to angels or demons. An architect was at her side, obsequious in his deference. "You will build it of these bricks," she said calmly, "neither adding nor taking away a single one; and, moreover, build it upon the identical spot where the kiln now stands."

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And so, day after day, she watched the building of this chapel dedicated to a poet's God, and, with the help of a priest from a distant city, as if she feared any nearer, knelt within and blessed it. A lamp was hung over the altar, and for thirty years it has been replenished by the church, for when the troublous times came for the little Corsican, monsieur, my lady gave her all to the faith, entered a convent, where she died a year after Waterloo, and was brought here for rest.

Ah, a strange history, monsieur. But a stranger fact has yet to be told; for in 1818, having saved from the wreck enough for my little tavern, where you tasted my red wine and cheese to-day, a dapper little stranger saluted me in my arbour. There was a frivolous smirk upon his countenance, and he was dressed in the fashion of the foreign parvenue whom we plain men hate.

"You do not know me," he said. I nearly reeled from my chair, "It is you? Mon Dieu! We have a chapel dedicated to you down the valley here." The conceited creature laughed in a vain, empty chuckle, and said, "Bring me some of your best wine, and then tell me about it!" After recovering from the shock, I told him. "But you, monsieur," I cried, "how did you escape?"

He drank deeply, then said: "When she threw me that dagger I realised that hope was gone; and to save her I must play the martyr. I looked up through the chimney of that hell and saw two stars. They gave me courage. I was younger then. We Pyrénése climb mountains where every unfeathered beast fails. It was a choice between a dagger for me or dishonour for her, with this slight hope.

"V'la! though nearer dead than alive, I watched my funeral-pyre from yonder hill-top, then fled to the coast, and thence to America. Drink again, monsieur. Ah, what fools we are when we are young! What risks we run to be sentimental."

And this, my friend, from the man who had blotted out two noble lives, and had brought our little kingdom here to the dust! Well, I suppose that is what the little Corsican would call "making history," but it seems to me sad travail for the living historians. Is it not true?

Go and look, monsieur. You will find the altar lamp still burning. The slab which marks her sleep you will know by the rude image of an arrowed heart upon it. She carved it there with her own hand.

In the summer of 1869 I had occasion to visit a well-known asylum for the insane. The institution is, I believe, reckoned among the best of its kind in this country. The distinguishing feature in this system of treatment is that of according to patients all reasonable freedom—a system, I am informed, which has been followed with the most encouraging results. So far as practicable, the inmates of the asylum are treated like sane men and women; instead of being constantly reminded of their infirmity, they are led to forget it, if the power to forget it remains.

On the day of my visit I had purchased a case of medicines for one of the assistant physicians, who was an intimate friend. This I had done at his request, and it was to deliver these medicines that I made the journey to the asylum.

Ascending the massive stone steps, I was conducted by one of the attendants into the reception-room. Here I was left to wait until my presence could be announced to my friend, Dr. Balcom. It so happened that I was the only occupant of the room, and to engage my mind while I waited, I picked up a copy of De Quincey's "Confessions" and began to read. While thus occupied a voice accosted me, saying, "Did you wish to see anyone, sir?"

Looking up, I saw the speaker was a small, neatly dressed man, who had entered unobserved, and who had evidently addressed me in order to make his presence known.

"I was waiting," I replied, "to see Dr. Balcom."

"The doctor is engaged just at present on a very important case. Would you like to make a tour of the building?"

I answered that I should be pleased to do so, and thereupon my friend conducted me out into the hall. I discovered that he was one of the attendants in the asylum; and he also informed me that he studied insanity for a number of years, with a view to fitting himself for a physician.

Under so excellent a guide I was conducted through the building, and shown the numerous points of interest. Those patients whose cases possessed particular interest were also pointed out to me, and their idiosyncrasies fully explained.

"The man whom we just passed," said my companion, referring to a large, fresh-faced, mild-eyed patient, "is one of the most dangerous patients we ever had."

"Indeed!" I replied; "one would not think so from looking at him."

"No; but the appearance of all insane people is deceptive. There was a woman here some time ago—a pale, sweet-faced, delicate creature—whom we all thought a saint, and who acted as one until she succeeded in getting hold of a carving knife, and then she cut the throats of two of her fellow patients."

"Is there not danger," I asked, "in granting so much liberty to the inmates?"

"Well, it is our peculiar system. We find in some instances, of course, that the freedom is abused, but in the majority of cases it works well."

This and much more conversation took place between the attendant and myself as we passed through the halls.

"I observe," he said, "that you carry a medicine chest, and I infer that you are a physician."

"No," I rejoined; "although I have the equipments of a doctor, I should make but sorry work at using them. They belong to Dr. Balcom, and I called to deliver them." Then, looking at my watch, I added, "I fear that I am keeping the doctor waiting by my long absence."

"I think he is not yet disengaged," returned my companion; "we shall have time to go out on the roof of the building, from which the views are really magnificent."

Accordingly my guide led the way up the spiral staircase, which connected the topmost storey with the roof, I following at his heels. As we emerged through the broad skylight the scene which presented itself to the eye was really magnificent. To the right lay the river, winding like a silver thread through the pleasant valley; in front could be seen the distant spires of the neighbouring town glistening like the sunlight; and afar off rose the hills, their summits lost in the blue of the heavens. The carefully kept grounds of the asylum beneath us looked like a map, gorgeous with its many hues of flowers.

"This certainly is a splendid view," I said.

"It is still better from the opposite side of the building," returned my guide. "Let us go over there."

Accordingly we walked along the flat roof, the attendant taking the precaution to close the skylight behind us, lest any

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of the patients should be tempted to follow us. The asylum is some two hundred and fifty feet in length, and as we emerged from the westerly end of the roof we had this considerable distance to walk.

Suddenly, when we had reached a point midway in the building, my companion stopped and turning upon me abruptly, said: "Have you a large brain?"

I looked at him a little wonderingly, and then laughed as I replied: "Well, if I have, the world has not discovered it."

"Don't jest, sir," he said petulantly, and with a seriousness that flashed an unpleasant suspicion across my mind. "I wish to know, distinctly, whether or not you have a large brain?"

He was looking me full in the face, with a peculiar expression in his dark eyes which I had not before observed. There was not the slightest betrayal of levity in his manner. He was terribly in earnest. His thin white fingers worked convulsively, and there was a twitching about the muscles of the mouth, such as I have seen in persons suffering intense pain. The horrible truth flashed upon me as I returned his steadfast gaze. This man was a maniac.

I am possessed, I fancy, of an average amount of courage, but at that moment I felt it oozing out of the very pores of my skin. I know I turned deathly pale, and for a moment was utterly unable to think. Then I grew calmer. Doubtless this man had brought me on the roof of the building with the idea of pushing me off. As I have already said, he was a small man. Physically, I was his superior. But I was without weapon of defence. Suppose that he was armed!

"My good sir," I said, endeavouring to speak in a natural tone, "I can assure you that my brain is not a large one, and as my time is limited I think we had better go down now."

I made a movement as if to retrace my steps to the skylight. Quick as thought the madman sprang in front of me, and, with his eyes glaring wildly, albeit he spoke in a low, unexcited voice, he said:

"I think your brain is large enough for my purpose, sir. You must understand that I have a great mission in this world to fulfil—a mission which I have not as yet begun. The strain upon my own mental faculties will be too great. I therefore intend to take your brain and insert it in my own head."

Here he drew from the breast pocket of his coat a large-sized clasp dagger, which he opened, and began to run the blade up and down the palm of his hand.

"I have given years of thought to this subject," he continued, "and I am convinced that I shall succeed. With a double brain power I shall be enabled to accomplish a double amount of brain work. I have been waiting a long time for a subject, but not until I saw you did I find one suited to my purpose. You are the man—the brain for which I have been watching."

"I fear, sir," I said, "that you are sadly mistaken. Your idea is a grand one—an original one. But I am not fit to aid you in carrying it out. You should select a strong, active healthy brain. Mine, on the contrary, is weak and diseased. Why, sir, up to the age of fourteen I was considered an idiot. Since then my friends do not permit me to have control of my own affairs. I am actually little better than a lunatic. I can neither read nor write, I——"

"Nevertheless," he interrupted, "you will answer my purpose, and I am about to take out your brain with this dagger, and insert it in my own head. I have brought you out on the roof that we may be free from interruptions. You will oblige me by now lying down."

If my mind had been stunned by the first discovery of the man's madness it was active enough now. A thousand schemes rushed through my mind; I took in the situation fully. I was alone with a madman armed with an ugly weapon, and he bent upon my destruction. To cry out would be useless; nobody could hear me. The chances of any aid from those within the asylum were small indeed. I could not run away. If I attempted to gain the skylight I should certainly be killed. The medicine case in my hand suggested the thought which saved my life.

"If you are determined to make use of such an unworthy subject as I," I said, "well and good: I shall offer no further resistance. But I ask that you will grant me five minutes while I address a brief farewell to all my friends. I will give it to you to deliver to them,"

"Very well," he replied, "if you know how to write, proceed. I will not wait five minutes."

He took up his position a foot from me, watching every movement I made with a horrible eagerness. I knelt down with my back towards him, took from the medicine case a bottle of chloroform (which I knew it contained), and saturated my handkerchief with the liquid. This I succeeded in doing without his knowledge. Then, rising to my feet, I scribbled some unintelligible words upon the back of an envelope, and said:

"You will do me the honour of reading what I have written here."

He came towards me, and while I held the envelope in my hand, stood by my side and looked at the writing. I had the handkerchief in my right hand and the envelope in the left. As he bent forward to decipher the words, I suddenly clutched his hand which held the dagger, and at the same instant clapped the handkerchief over his mouth and face. He struggled fiercely for a moment or two, and then the fumes of the drug began to tell upon him. His efforts to release himself grew weaker, and he finally fell to the floor insensible.

With all haste I made my way to the skylight, down the spiral staircase, and into the hall below. There I recounted what had happened, and two of the assistants were sent to bring down the murderous maniac. He recovered from the effects of the chloroform, and when last I heard of him he was still looking for a subject to furnish him with an extra brain.

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A DIAMOND TIARA

SHE stood before a water-colour of Ranger's, and wished with all her heart she were far up in the deep quiet of the shade by the river; then she turned her queenly face to her aunt. She held her head high in such proud fashion, did this rare beauty, Madeline.

"If I seem impatient with you," said the elder lady, half pettishly, "it is because you are never impressed. You were always a puzzle to me. Last night at dinner you were more splendid than any beauty there, and that diamond tiara burned like fire in your hair, but you remained the same passive girl you always are. I often wonder, dear, whether anything ever could stir you!

"Don't think for a moment I am so entirely devoid of my senses as to fancy you are going to marry that antiquated millionaire for love. But I often wonder if you could have cared for any man as women sometimes do to the end of their lives. I am going to tell you about one——. That bell means that the carriage is ready."

"Oh, there they are now, just as I speak of them, riding by in that glistening equipage! How darkly he smiles upon me, and he's staring almost rudely at you! He was ill yesterday at the dinner, became faint at the drawing-room door. Wrap the furs well about you, my dear, these December days are nowhere so chill as here in this bleak country.

"Yes, that sad-eyed young girl by his side is his wife. We shall meet them again on the Boulevard up at the fountain, for there is a circular curve there, and everybody drives round it and comes back. You could hardly have seen her, they passed so quickly, and yesterday she was obliged to leave us without having met you, on account of her husband, you know.

"She came from Ireland, dear, damp Ireland, and brought with her a heart full of freshness and hope; and her face, oh, one rarely meets such a face in the wise, thoughtful girls of to-day!

"It was in London he met her, at her first ball, and he led her through the dance and made love to her, and all the time his thoughts were given to another woman—yes, Madeline, so faithless are the hearts of men.

"Then, later on, he offered her his heart—his traitor heart—marred by a longing for that other sweet face. And yet he wrote to his mother that he had found the rarest of jewels, deep in an old-fashioned setting.

"Soon he claimed her dear, noble heart for his own. He told her bright love-tales, and pictured their future with joy and contentment, and never a shadow of care. They would dwell in a modern fairyland where love reigned supreme—long, sweet, happy days.

"And he brought her over here to his Parisian home of broad, echoing halls, and stately, carved pillars, and great winding staircases going up under huge, massive arches. And so, for one short, happy year, she reigned queen of his home and his heart.

"But a day, heavy laden with sorrow, came upon her life, and darkened for ever the sweetness and glow of the future. It happened on the day of some election. An important paper which was in his possession was missing, and she helped him to hunt for it. Somehow, in her searching, a secret drawer in his desk suddenly opened, in consequence of a spring she had unconsciously touched.

"It disclosed to her wondering eyes an exquisite miniature, carved in ivory enamel, and on it was the face of a beautiful girl; but, Madeline, dear, you are cold! Are even these furs insufficient? And I really believe you are not listening to me. Well, then, to return to my poor hurt dove. She quieted the beating of her doubting heart, and looked to her husband for protection against the dreadful doubts, which would present themselves to her. And she was sadly in need of that protection promised in their solemn marriage vow, and of the life-long love that had seemed to be stretching out before her.

"But, Madeline, he could not tell her an untruth; he told her all; and his tone and his words chanted the requiem of a young heart that was dying, and only revived when he said that not a spark of affection remained in his heart for the cold, proud girl of the picture, and that his wife was his love.

"That miniature, he told her, had been wrought by himself, even the silky gold waves, and the star of the diamond tiara that crowned her fair brow.

"Madeline, dear, I fear for you in this climate; you are actually shivering! Raise your collarette. There! that will be warmer. But the picture, as she held it up, lo! a tiny card dropped out on the rug where she stood, and, Madeline, to be quick with my story, for we are nearly at home, and you are as white as the snow—on that card, in a few words, was written the story of that other woman's love. My poor Norma read it aloud to her husband—the love of that cold, proud girl's life.

"And there, if you will believe me, he, strong man that he is, actually fainted away when he heard it! Just think of it, Madeline, swooned like a woman at her feet—at the feet of his bride, the sweet, lovely girl he had won for his wife—fainted for the love of another woman.

"But she did not swoon, though, God help her! Far better had she died then, for the heart that was tender before turned to stone at the sight of him there, and the knowledge of his sorrow and remorse.

"Afterwards, he told her the story of how he had received the picture as a final answer to his letter, when he sought to win her for his wife. The card had slipped through the opening at the back of the miniature, and, until that fatal moment, he never knew it meant acceptance. Madeline, dear, your cheeks are pale, and your eyes so sad! I will burden your light heart with no more such stories.

"Ah! here they are now! Don't draw down your veil so! Not that side, right here at the turn! Quick! Pshaw! They have passed us and you have not seen them. But, to-night she is hostess, and you may dwell on her beauty and his nobleness, and remark, as society does, upon the excellence of the match.

"No, dear, I have never looked upon that miniature. I never shall, but sometimes I feel a world of pity for that beautiful girl who believes her lover to be false.

"Here we are at home, dear; I fear you are not well. Your cheeks have lost their colour, but a week here will do you a world of good."

. . . . . .

"My niece was unable to come, dear, this evening," said Madeline's aunt to her young hostess. "She received word to-day to return home at once. She would not think of remaining, although I urged her as much as I dared. I regret you two did not meet her. She is really like you, dear, except that her hair is deep gold, and she is taller; but her eyes are the saddest eyes in the world, although her life is the brightest."

Before the dance had begun that evening, Madeline was flying back to England, away from her aunt and this story to which she had listened that day. Stowed away in a corner of her huge portmanteau was a jewel case and glistening and colouring, deep in its bed of soft crimson velvet, reposed the star of that diamond tiara.

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THE OUTLAWS OF THE AIR.

By George Griffith,

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "The Syren of the Skies," etc.

CHAPTER XLIX.

Mutiny.

The deceptive peace that reigned on board the *Revanche* was maintained unbroken, as though by common consent, until a couple of hours after sun-rise, when the air-ship was flying northwards at a speed of eighty miles an hour, some three thousand feet over the Bay of Biscay.

Renault, Hartog, Taxil, and the two girls had breakfasted together in perfect apparent cordiality, discussing the plans of the immediate future, as though they honestly meant to act together for the rest of their lives, instead of being resolved each upon the other's destruction, or captivity and wholesale treachery to their followers. Anarchy, as Renault had said to Lea, was about to produce its logical and only possible result. Armed with the means, if not of conquering, at least of terrorising the whole earth, the inherent viciousness of their principles, by making it impossible for the Anarchists to trust each other with authority and confidence, was about to turn their weapons against each other and save society by their mutual destruction.

The dream which the Arch-Anarchist had dreamt while crossing the Pacific in the stolen *Vengeur* had been fulfilled almost to the letter. His name was a word of terror from one end of Europe to the other, and also, in a lesser degree, over those other areas of civilisation which had learned of his exploits and waited in fear and trembling to see which of them he would attack first. And now, at the very flood-tide of his power and success, he saw himself confronted, as he had foreseen, by treachery and mutiny in his own camp, and on board his own flag-ship.

The desperate resolve that he had taken was really the only reply that he could make to the threat. To save himself and the crew that he believed faithful to his fortunes it was necessary to sacrifice every one else in the camp, and perhaps to destroy with his own guns, the fleet on which so much labour and so much treasure, bought with the blood of thousands of ruthlessly slaughtered victims, had been spent. But to all this he scarcely gave a thought. He had decided on his course of action, and he was one of those men who never make two decisions. Characteristically, too, he depended solely upon himself to execute his own unspoken sentence upon Hartog. As he rose from the breakfast table in the saloon, he said:

"Taxil, will you go and relieve François in the conning-tower and leave Duprez in charge of the engines; then come back and bring the other fellows with you? I want to tell them something that I think it will interest them to hear. I believe there have been some complaints lately about our not taking our comrades sufficiently into our confidence, and it won't do to have any misunderstandings of that sort in work like ours. We'd better get this one cleared up as soon as possible."

"Very well," said Taxil. "I'll have them here in a minute." And with that he left the saloon.

"I tink dat is a very wise measure on your part, Monsieur Max," said Hartog, beaming at him through his spectacles with an expression of the most absolutely unsuspecting innocence. "Dere is noding so dangerous as misunderstandings among people like us, aldough I really can't see vy dese fellows cannot follow mit perfect confidence—especially ven dey haf been led as perfectly as you haf led dem."

"With your very able assistance, friend Franz," interrupted Renault with a smile as Taxil re-entered the saloon, followed by six of the crew.

Whipped a silk handkerchief round Renault's throat.

Taxil and a stalwart Frenchman named Louis André, who acted as second officer, came and stood beside Renault, while the others remained in a group behind Hartog's chair. Then Renault continued, still with a smile on his lips:

"As you say, however, to people engaged in the desperate work that we have got to do there is nothing so dangerous as misunderstandings, and it was to clear up one of them which might have had very serious consequences that I have thought fit to call this informal little meeting, and, to begin with, I am going to accuse you, Franz Hartog, before the officers and crew of the *Revanche*, of treachery to the cause of Anarchy and attempted mutiny in the camp. If it had not been for the very great, and, indeed, indispensable services that you rendered to us at the beginning, I tell you frankly I would have shot you as I shot Berthauld—on suspicion. As it is, you shall have the opportunity of defending yourself, and if you can clear yourself, why——."

Renault's speech was never finished, for it ended in a choking, gurgling gasp, and the sound of his body falling heavily to the floor of the saloon. Hartog had heard his indictment without moving a muscle of his face, until he saw Renault's hand moving toward the hilt of a pistol that rested in an open case at his belt. Then he had nodded to Taxil and André.

Quick as thought André, with all the skill of a practised garotter, had whipped a silk handkerchief round Renault's throat, drawn it tight, and then, forcing his knee into the small of his back, flung him to the floor.

Taxil was on him in an instant, turned him over on his face, and tied his elbows behind his back before André loosed the suffocating pressure upon his windpipe. Meanwhile, Franz had pulled out a pistol, and covered the two girls, saying as he did so:

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"Sit still, my tear young ladies, dere is no von vants to hurt you; but it might be dangerous for you to move just now. Here, Leon, Mascoll, come and take care of Madame Lea and Miss Sophie, but don't hurt dem unless it is necessary. Now friendts, Taxil and André, if you have got our late captain safely secured you may let him up to hear me finish his speech for him."

Everything had happened with such paralysing rapidity that Max had not been able to make a single movement in self-defence, and the two girls were sitting motionless with fear, each with the barrel of a pistol against the back of her head, before either of them had very well realised what had happened.

As for Max, even after he had regained his breath, he still seemed too stupefied by the utterly unexpected attack to grasp the astounding fact that the crew, upon whose fidelity he would have staked his existence had, without the slightest warning, turned traitors to a man, and that the little German had so completely outwitted him that, instead of being his victim, he was now his master.

Hartog sat quietly grinning and enjoying his bewilderment; but by the time he found his voice again he had recovered both his senses and his courage, and casting a glance of unutterable contempt about him—under which more than one of the crew lowered his eyes in something like shame—he said as quietly as if he had been issuing an order in working the ship:

"You miserable curs! And so it's for this that I made you masters of the air, and put the world at your mercy? And it was for this," he went on, with a glance of scornful hate at Hartog, "that I rescued you and your crew from the bourgeois at Newcastle when I might have left you to be hanged like the dogs that you are. Well, I suppose I might have expected that from a German, but I didn't think it of you, Taxil. Did you rescue me from Newgate only to turn traitor just when we had the world at our mercy? You might just as well have left me to hang as that."

"You had better hear what Hartog has to say before I answer that," said Taxil, in a somewhat forced tone, and with a faint flush as if of shame on his face.

"Jah, I vill do de talking," said Hartog, folding his arms on the table in front of him and blinking angrily at Max through his spectacles. "Treachery, my late friendt Renault, seems to pe a game dat two can play at, and it is because you haf turned twice and trice traitor to der cause of Anarchy and your own comrades dat dis little accident has happened to you. You had nodings but your own suspicions of me, but I haf proofs against you.

"First you stole de paper mit der formula of der fuel vich you had agreed to leave so dat if you got killed I could make more fuel for de oder ships. You did dat so as to leave all de rest mit no fuel ven dey haf used up vat dey haf, so den dey vould be helpless vile you took de *Revanche* away, and left dem to be captured and killed by our enemies.

"After dat you invited me to come mit you on board dis ship, so dat you could trow me overboard and keep de secret in your possession. Is not dat de case, Taxil, and did not Sophie Vronsky tell you dat? And did ve not tell de oder captains, and did ve not all resolve dat Max Renault had ceased to be a goot Anarchist, and had become a traitor and a tyrant?"

"Yes," said Taxil, who by this time had recovered his self-possession. "Sophie told me of the plot against you, and I warned you because I would not be a party to such treachery for anyone's sake. Then I went with you to secure the paper, and we found it stolen. We agreed with the other captains that this was plain proof of treachery, and we decided that, as Max Renault had always treated traitors, so he should be treated himself."

"And are you all agreed to dat?" said Hartog, looking round at the others. "Vill you haf freedom of action according to de goot principles of Anarchy, or vill you haf a tyrant for your master who has already turned traitor?"

The men glanced at each other for a moment and then at Max, who still stood defiantly facing them between Taxil and André. Then one of them stepped forward and spoke for the rest.

"We will have neither tyrants nor traitors," he said, with a scowl at Max. "Comrade Renault has led us well, but we are satisfied that he has used his ability to make us his servants instead of his free and equal comrades. That is contrary to the principles of Anarchy, and we will not have it."

The rest nodded, and then Max broke out, with a short, bitter laugh:

"Just so! You are too simple and too greedy to see that in work like ours one must lead and the rest follow. Well, do as you like. I am not going to ask my life of a lot of curs like you. The game's up, I suppose, as far as I'm concerned, and it serves me right because I trusted a woman with my secret, and she, of course, trusted another.

"*Cherchez la femme*, as usual," he continued, with a half-scornful, half-reproachful glance at Lea and Sophie, who sat and heard him with downcast heads and burning cheeks. "I am not the first man who has trusted a woman to his ruin, and I don't suppose I shall be the last. Well, you others, what are you going to do with me? You may as well get it over quickly, and then go to perdition your own way."

"Dere vill be blenty of time for us to get dere ven ve haf decided vich road to take, Monsieur Max, and dere is no particular hurry about disposing of you. Dere are a great many people in London who vill be glad to see you again, and I haf been tinking dat you shall pay dem a visit to-night, out of consideration for all you haf done—as you vere goot enough to say of me just before you meant to pitch me into de Bay of Biscay. Ve vill not kill you ourselves; you shall haf von chance for your life, and if you do not make de best of it, vell den dat is your look out. Now you vill go to your cabin and be taken goot care of. Take dose two girls avay too, and see dat dey don't get up to any mischief. Keep dem in separate cabins for de present."

Neither Max nor either of the girls made the slightest resistance to what they saw was inevitable. For the present, at any rate, they were entirely at the mercy of Hartog and Taxil, and to resist now would merely be to subject themselves to violence.

When Max was taken to his cabin, he was tied hand and foot, and then tied again into the hammock in which he always slept while on board the *Revanche*. André remained on guard over him, and at his first attempt to begin a conversation curtly told him to hold his tongue if he didn't want to be gagged, so forced him to content himself with silence and his own bitter reflections on the fearfully sudden change in his fortune, and the unknown fate that was awaiting him in London. Lea and Sophie were simply locked in their cabins, and there left—likewise to their reflections, while Hartog, Taxil, and the rest arranged their plans for the immediate present.

Strange as it may seem, neither of the girls had difficulty

"Cherchez la femme, as usual."

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in recovering their equanimity, in spite of the shock that the scene in the saloon had been to both of them. Mentally and morally they were not women in the best and commonly-accepted sense of the word. To begin with, they were criminals pitiless and unscrupulous, and, therefore, necessarily of a low moral caste, and this was especially true of Lea.

Despite her extraordinary physical charms and a highly developed intellect, she was little better than a beautiful animal, who used her beauty and the power it gave her as the means of attainment to the given ends of the moment. Of heart in the womanly sense of the word she had literally none. She had not, and never had had, any real love for Max such as a true woman gives to her lover or her husband. She had given herself to him simply because she admired him physically and mentally, and because she saw, or believed she saw, in him a man who would enable her to satisfy at once her ambition and her genuine hatred of organised society.

But now she saw him defeated in his aims and helpless at the mercy of his enemies with very much the same feelings that a tigress might have seen her lord and master lying mangled and dying under the claws of a stronger than he. She would realise him if she could, but more for the sake of continuing to reign with him and of placing him under an obligation to her than of doing him a purely personal service, and in one event and one only would she avenge him if he was killed.

She had firmly resolved that any attempt to make her the slave or plaything of any of the others whom he had ruled, and she had ruled through him, should be fatal to the *Revanche* and her crew if she could make it so. Taxil she believed to be in love with Sophie, so she feared nothing from him. Hartog she looked upon with utter contempt, now not unmixed with dread and loathing, and as for André and the rest of the crew she regarded them as animals who might make good servants when held properly in control. As masters any one of them would have been unendurable, and if the worst came to the worst she was quite prepared to kill herself rather than be made the sport of their brutal passions.

She was still deep in such thoughts as these, and still vainly seeking for some possible path out of the miserable position in which the last sudden turn of fickle fortune had placed her, when she heard the bolt of the lock shoot back. She looked up as the door opened, and saw Taxil come into the cabin and shut the door behind him.

CHAPTER L.

HARTOG'S REVENGE.

"WELL, M. Taxil, so you have at last deigned to visit one of your captives," she said with just a suspicion of mockery in her tone, but still smiling not unpleasantly as he entered. "May I ask to what I am indebted for the honour—for I suppose I am to consider it an honour—of your visit? Have you come to tell me what decision the victors have come to with regard to the disposition of the spoils?"

She looked up as the door opened.

She was perfectly cool and collected now. Like all women of ready wit and self-confidence she had seen in his entrance a call to arms, to a battle of wits, in which the victory would be not to physical strength or the advantage of position, but rather to the arts of subtlety and persuasion. Taxil looked at her as she spoke, flushed slightly, and hesitated for a moment before he replied.

In that moment Lea saw that she had gained half the victory already. Taxil was a younger man than Renault and infinitely less skilled in those wiles of her sex of which she was such a perfect mistress. He might be master of the air-ship and Renault's fate, but in her eyes he was a boy, and at a glance she saw that as such she could humour him. She waited for his answer, leaning back on the sofa on which she was seated, and toying with a little bunch of trinkets that hung from the watch chain fastened to her belt.

As for Taxil all his courage and the assurance of triumph seemed to have deserted him the instant that he found himself alone with her. He had come prepared if necessary to use threats and even to proceed to violent measures to reduce her to submission in case she objected to the change of command in which the mutiny had resulted. He had been quite prepared, should she prove refractory, to try the effects of imprisonment, if necessary accompanied by short commons, to bring her to look favourably upon his suit; but now that he actually stood in her presence he felt that in some mysterious fashion their positions had been reversed—that he had become the suitor and she the mistress to accept or reject as seemed best to her.

There was no time for him to argue with himself in order to convince himself of the absurdity of this view. She sat there placidly waiting his reply to her question just as though he had been paying an afternoon call at her house in Paris, rather than visiting one who was virtually his prisoner of war. He had to say something, and that with the best grace he could.

"I have not come to tell you anything," he said at last in an awkward, constrained voice. "But rather to ask something of you."

"And that is?" She lifted her eyebrows for a moment, looked at him inquiringly, and then dropped them again.

"That is—well, that is, of course, you must understand, Ma'm'zelle Lea, that matters are now altogether changed on board the *Revanche*, and I at present have the honour to stand where Max Renault stood before the discovery of his treachery——"

"Through the treachery of others and those whom he trusted most!" she interrupted with the mocking note in her voice a little more pronounced. "That is what you were going on to say, I presume. Well, granted that, and what then?"

"What then? Why this," he exclaimed taking a couple of quick strides across the cabin and throwing himself on one knee beside the sofa. "There was no treachery on my part, whatever it may have seemed to you. It was only fidelity to the Cause, for we had proved him traitor first; but, even if there had been treachery, surely you do not need to be told what would have made me turn traitor if that had been possible."

"I?" she said, half lifting her eye-lids and looking steadily at him from under the dark long lashes. "I? What have I to understand? I should have thought that that was a question you should have addressed to Sophie rather than to me. Didn't you know that Max was perfectly agreeable to your making a match of it?"

"Sophie! Bah!" he exclaimed, taking hold of her hand and pressing it passionately to his lips. "Do you think I would have done this for Sophie's sake? No, Lea, whatever you may think of my temerity I have been flying at higher game than her. It is you that I want, that I have always wanted, and loved and hungered for ever since my eyes were first blessed with the vision of your loveliness. It is you that I would ask to share with me the empire which, for your sake, I would dare anything and do anything to conquer. Grant me my prayer, and there is nothing on earth that you shall desire and not obtain if I can give it you. Give me yourself and, in exchange, I will give you the empire of the world."

She had heard him to the end in silence. She had not even taken her hand away, but suffered him to hold it and kiss it,

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as he had done, between his passionately uttered sentences. Instinctively she contrasted this boyish courtship of his with Max's masterful wooing in her boudoir in the Rue Vernet. She saw at a glance how, if at all, she would be able to save herself from becoming the victim of the violence which he certainly could use if he chose, and possibly also of saving Max, who had by no means suffered by the momentary comparison she had made between them.

"Ah, I see!" she said with a lazy, indulgent smile. "It is a case of *le roi est mort, vive le roi*, is it? You have dethroned Max and you wish me to share the throne with you as I did with him. But that is very cruel to poor Sophie, you know, and not altogether flattering to me. You come to woo me as a conqueror to a captive, and I may as well tell you that in such a guise your suit is hopeless.

"Of course, I know that you have strength on your side, but I also know that I have it in my power to put myself far beyond your reach if I even thought you were going to use it. You see that ring on the hand you have been kissing with such fervour? Well, that is such a ring as Lucrezia Borgia used to wear. Ah, so you let go already, do you! Perhaps you are wise, but I could have killed you with it some time ago if I had wanted to, and you must understand that I can kill myself with it at any moment that I choose, and further that I will do so the instant that you attempt to take any unfair advantage.

"No, don't say anything now, please, let me finish, and let us understand one another clearly. I am not to be taken by assault, understand that once for all. To what you have said I reply neither 'yes' nor 'no' for the present, because I will give no answer except in perfect freedom. There is no reason that I can see why I should not like you as well as Max, unless, of course, you take deliberate steps to make me dislike you, but before you can expect any answer you must give me my freedom back—perfect freedom, mind, so far as the ship is concerned. I must be free to come and go as I like, unwatched and uncontrolled, and you must set Sophie free too, so that I may be with her if I choose."

"It is you that I want—that I have always wanted."

"But, Max," he objected, rising to his feet again; "you do not mean——"

"No," she said. "I see what you are going to say. I will promise not to interfere with him. I see that it would be useless even if he did not deserve to be treated as a traitor. And, for the matter of that, I don't mind confessing that he won me rather by force than persuasion, for I believe he would have killed me if I had refused to come with him to the Camp. Perhaps you may win me more worthily; who knows? If you can, why, then you will, and there's an end of it; but you will never do it while you are the master and I am the captive."

"And I will never try to do so," he said, stepping backwards to the door and throwing it open. "There, your door is open and you are free, and here is the key of Sophie's cabin. Now I have accepted your terms. You will keep faith with me, won't you?"

"Yes, I will," she said, getting up from the sofa and holding out her hand to him. He took it as a courtier might have taken the hand of a queen, and, as he bent over it and kissed it, she said: "As you keep faith with me, so will I keep it with you. As for the future—well, you know what the English say in their proverb, 'Faint heart ne'er won fair lady yet.' And now, before you go, I have a favour to ask you."

"It is granted before you ask it," he replied, looking up at her with a light in his eyes and an expression on his face which told her how complete her victory over him had been.

"Well, it is only this," she said, "I want you to put Max somewhere else and let me share his cabin with Sophie. It is the biggest in the ship, you know, and we shall be more comfortable there. You see, she is the only other woman on board, and you can understand that I should like to be with her."

"Of course," he said. "There can be no objection to that. I will have him moved at once, and in a few moments you can take possession. *Au revoir!*" And with that he bowed himself out of the cabin, leaving the door open behind him.

The first use she made of her freedom was to go to Sophie's room and lock herself in there. A quarter of an hour later Taxil knocked at the door and told her that Max's cabin was ready for them. She unlocked the door and went out followed by Sophie, who seemed to be crying bitterly, and went straight to her new quarters.

"Now," she said to Sophie, as she locked the door behind her. "I will show you how we can turn the tables on these traitors, and how you shall have all the revenge that even a woman scorned can want. I am afraid there is no chance of saving Max, for they will watch him closely, and the first attempt we made they would kill him, but we can avenge him and ourselves too. They won't watch us, for that fool Taxil—I suppose you won't mind me calling him that now?—has been pleased to fall in love with me, and when a man's in love a woman can do what she likes with him. He has promised me perfect freedom on board the ship, and this is the first use I am going to make of it."

As she spoke she took a little key from the bunch of trinkets at her belt and knelt down before a little triangular cabinet fixed to the wall in one corner of the cabin. She opened it, pulled out a drawer, and took a small bunch of keys from it. Then she pulled up the thick rug which covered the floor of the cabin and disclosed half-a-dozen slides in the floor, each of which had a key-hole at the end. She unlocked one and pulled the slide back, disclosing a cavity filled with a light reddish-grey powder.

"That," she said, "is one of the reservoirs for the reserve of the motor fuel, and this is the fuel itself. Now watch."

She thrust her hand down through the powder at the end of the compartment at which she had unlocked it, groped about for a moment, and then took hold of something and pulled. "The powder immediately began to flow down through a hole, and as it disappeared she raked more and more of it over the hole with her hand until at last the compartment was empty.

"There goes a thousand miles of travelling power," she said. "Scattered uselessly in the air! Now you must help me, Sophie, and we will get rid of the lot before they suspect

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anything. I'll unlock the slides and you open them. We'll have them all empty in ten minutes."

"I see," said Sophie, with a savage snap of her teeth, "you mean that if they do give Max up to the English, as I suppose they mean to do, they shan't be able to fly very far afterwards, and so they'll be in just the same plight as the ships they have left behind at the Camp."

"Exactly," said Lea, as she went on unlocking the slides and pulling them open. "Max intrusted this secret to me so that I could do this if anything ever happened to him. Hartog can't make any more of the fuel without getting fresh materials, and to get them he must either meet with the *Pilgrim* or go back to the Camp, and I don't think he'll dare to do that, for he has turned traitor to both parties. Besides, he knows there's a large reserve on board somewhere, though I don't think either he or Taxil knows that it's here, and if they did they'll come to look for it too late now."

"*This is the fuel itself. Now watch.*"

While they talked both girls worked hard shovelling the priceless powder out through the holes at the bottoms of the reservoirs. At the speed at which the air-ship was flying it was drawn out by the strong draught and scattered instantly and invisibly astern, and in less than half-an-hour all the six reservoirs had been emptied, and the *Revanche* had been deprived of motive power which would have carried her over a voyage of six thousand miles.

Then the slides were drawn over and locked again, and everything in the cabin replaced in order. At mid-day their lunch was brought to them by the man whose turn it was to act for the day as steward, and just as they had finished there came a knock at the door. It opened, and Hartog came in smiling and bowing, with a ludicrous attempt at mock politeness.

"My tear young ladies," he said, stopping just inside the cabin and rubbing his hands together with an air of intense satisfaction, "if you vill look out of de vindow you vill see dat ve are just coming ofer London, and if you vant to see de last of our late captain, Max, you had better come up on deck, and you shall see him. Dis vay, please, and don't loose any time, because ve are in a hurry."

"Thanks, M. Hartog; but, if it is all the same to you, we would rather stop here, I think," said Lea. "I suppose you mean to throw the poor fellow overboard, and neither of us——"

"Oh, no; I can assure you ve shall do noding of de kind," replied the German, bowing again, and still rubbing his hands together. "Ve could not tink of asking young ladies to look upon such a painful spectacle as dat. Ve are only going to put him in a place of safety and say 'goot-bye' to him politely. I can assure you you shall not see one hair of his head hurt, and I vould much rader you come dan dat I should haf to send an escort for you."

"That means, I suppose," said Lea, "that if we don't come you will fetch us by force in spite of what Taxil promised me?"

"Jah, dat is even so," said Hartog shortly, as he turned away and walked out of the door.

"I suppose we must go, Sophie," said Lea. "It will be better than being dragged out by that little brute and his men. Poor Max, I wonder what they are going to do with him! It will be a miserable end for him, whatever it is, and I'd give ten years of my life now to save him if I could; for, at any rate, he is a man, and these others are only fools or brutes."

Her voice broke as she ceased speaking, her face was ashy pale, and her limbs were trembling with apprehension and excitement now that the supreme moment in the fate of the man who had been her lover had come. Sophie, as pale and trembling as she was, nodded in reply, and put her arm through hers, and together the two girls went on deck.

Their first glance round showed them that they were floating over Trafalgar Square at a height of about eight hundred feet, the second showed them Max standing bound, gagged, and blindfolded, and with a noose of a rope round his body under his arm-pits, by the low rail that ran round the deck. Two men stood on either side of him and two others stood behind him holding the rope, and Hartog was close beside him with an open knife in his hand. As they reached the deck Lea had made a sudden motion as though to run to Max, but Taxil stopped her, whispering:—

"No, for heaven's sake don't go near him! If you do you'll only get hurt and do him no good. You'd have known nothing about it if it hadn't have been for that brute Hartog, but he would have you up to see what he is going to do. If you don't want to look shut your eyes and trust to me to settle with him afterwards."

But do what they would there was a horrible fascination about the scene which forced them to look whether they would or no. The air-ship sank slowly down towards the Square, from which they could see the people hurrying as fast as their legs could carry them, evidently in dread of a repetition of what had happened after Max's rescue from Newgate. When she reached the level of the capital of Nelson's column she stopped and swung slowly towards it, then she rose a little, and hung exactly over it.

Hartog now cut the cords which bound Renault's hands and feet, saying as he did so:

"Now, M. Max, it is time to say 'goot-bye.' Ven you touch ground holdt on in case you fall. You vill find yourself in a nice airy situation mit a goot extensive view. Here are some cigars and a box of matches vich I vill put into your pocket in case you vant to smoke ven you haf got dat gag out of your mouf. Now over mit him boys, and if he kicks knock him on de head to keep him quiet, or else he might fall and hurt himself."

As he gave the word Max was lifted bodily from the deck and the next moment hung suspended just over the flat surface of the capital of the column. In an agony and fear and horror Lea leant over the side and saw him lowered until his feet touched the stone and his outspread arms caught the base of the figure. Then the rope was cut. Hartog threw a piece of iron rod, round which was tied a piece of paper, down into the square and shouted once more:

"Goot-bye, M. Max. Take care of yourself and give our compliments to the goot people of London. Goot-bye!"

Then he stamped on the deck, and as the air-ship rose into the air and darted away to the eastward a mist floated before Lea's eyes, and with a faint cry of "Max! Max!" she fell fainting into Taxil's arms.

(To be continued.)

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A PROTESTED VERDICT.

"DEAR JACK,—I am so sorry about last night. I know I said hateful things to you, and I am so very, very sorry. Please forgive me, Jack. And please let our friendship stand as it used to. We have been such good friends for so long.

"It never can be changed as you wish it to be, so please let it go on in the old way.

'Write and tell me what day you want me to keep for you.

"Yours sincerely,

"EDITH."

He read the letter over, and then he read it again. His face flushed as he bit his lips. Forgive her? If there had been anything to forgive, of course he would. But there wasn't. It was his own fault; and yet she hadn't been—— She simply had refused him any hope of gaining from her more than friendship. Like a fool he had begged at least for the reason of her refusal. He had got it, and still he was dissatisfied. She had said that her ideal man was stronger than he.

She said it haltingly, but he could not change her views. He had asked her why she thought him weak, but she had not been able to quote any particular evidence of such characteristic. He had compared himself to other friends without suffering by the comparison; he had reminded her of instances where he had shown strength of character; his unswerving devotion to her was not a weak man's love.

Finally, she had been driven to bay, and had cried out, "Oh, I know you are! You're so careless and all. Why, Jack, it's your face, Not a strong line in it. Oh, dear——" and then she had cried.

There was an oath in his throat as he thought it all over, and it felt like a lump that he couldn't swallow, and that made his eyes smart. "Why should she have an idea like that? I suppose I've been sloppy about some things, but I didn't deserve that.

"Well, nobody will be able to accuse me of being weakly, good-natured in the future, that's all. And I won't let people do as they want with me now. But it wasn't fair to judge me like that. Oh, I'm not good enough for her! She was right. Dear Edith, I don't know how I can get on without you!"

For several days he stayed by himself. He answered her letter and appointed an afternoon a week later. He longed to see her again, but he knew how it would hurt. The old friendship could not come back, for a long time at least, and love was denied him. Neither one thing nor the other. If he went probably other men would be there, other men with whom he would always have to divide her, until one day one of them would take away even his little share.

After a few days of this moody, desolate idling he made an effort to get back into the old rut.

The old rut would generally have been considered to run through pleasant places. He had inherited an estate that left him free to follow his own inclinations in disposing of his time; and, as his tendencies leaned strongly towards painting, he had favoured them, and met with considerable success.

But that morning nothing in his studio could hold his attention. Presently he decided to abandon his endeavours in the direction of art and to try the more engrossing interest of business. An old lawyer, a bosom friend of his late father's, and who had been trustee, also, of Jack's estate before he attained his majority, looked after the management of his affairs, and him Jack decided to visit.

After a little genial talk the old gentleman said: "Now, in regard to that plot of ground that is leased to the St. Simon Mission Room, Jack; the lease expires shortly."

"Well?"

"An agent estate man said the other day that he could offer five times as much as that property is paying. It's a good charity, though, and I presume you would not wish to make a change?"

"Well—please see what the chap would offer. I think I'll let him have it."

"Why, my dear boy, you spend only a third of your income, and really those people——"

"Oh, I daresay. But please see him again."

The old lawyer looked curiously at him. Well, that sort of thing was in the air nowadays, and yet this was very unlike the boy.

After a little further talk Jack left the office. He had made resolves of which this was the first fruit. No; he couldn't have people riding over him continually. He got no credit for the good things he did, and unlimited credit for the bad things he never did. He was going to live better. And he was going out of his way no more than did his neighbours.

This new rôle irritated him, however; and so, too, did the few acquaintances he encountered.

He decided to go away for a few days—to go to some place where he could have a horse and a boat. Then for a while, at least, he could keep too tired to think. Why, that morning he had sincerely congratulated himself on discovering that five consecutive minutes had elapsed during which he had not been brooding on the old subject.

He went away, and without even his pipe. The trifling comforts of past days were of little satisfaction to him now. But he smiled bitterly as he thought of the absurdity of a weak man thus throwing off that most autocratic of habits.

He spent a miserable half-week according to his programme; then he returned to town.

One week gone, but he thought of all the other weeks that were to come. There was no reason why he should wish time to hurry, for it had nothing to bring him. Thus he reflected over his pipe. To-morrow he was to call on her. He told himself that if it were not for fear of hurting her a little he would never see her again; and then he heard the postman's knock, and trembled lest a letter should come from her postponing the engagement.

The morrow had brought no letter, and the time for his ordeal had come. He pressed the bell nervously. It was odd that everything in the drawing-room should be the same as when he had seen it before. There were some roses somebody had sent—she was coming. He heard the faint rustle of her skirt on the staircase.

"My dear Jack, I am glad to see you! But you're not looking well at all, Jack." His heart leaped. How sweetly pretty she was! But why in the world did she want to talk to him like that.

"I'm not? I'm sorry. I thought these clothes were so nice." But his tones were not as blithe as his words.

Then she asked some more questions, and he returned her gentleness by little speeches for which he blushed. She was forbearing, and presently she burst out with "Oh, Jack, I've just heard of the most heartless, contemptible thing?"

"Yes. Somebody jilted a man?"

"Lately I've been trying to do a little for some people in the East End. They're all so poor and miserable, you know. One of them has just written that the mission room in Addition Street, that does so much for them, is to be torn down to make

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room for horrid tenements. Oh, it's cruel! Just think of anybody doing that, Jack!"

Several expressions had flitted over his face as she spoke, but he did not answer her speech until she again asked his opinion of the landlord; then he blushed and said:

"Oh, I suppose he had too much strength of character to be a public purse."

She looked at him in surprise as she said: "Why, Jack, how nasty you are!"

"Well, it does require strength to resist their appeals and all that, doesn't it?"

"Perhaps it may, but——"

Jack leaned suddenly forward, and his eyes sparkled. "Look here, Edith! Do you want me to help you?"

"Oh, I'd give anything——"

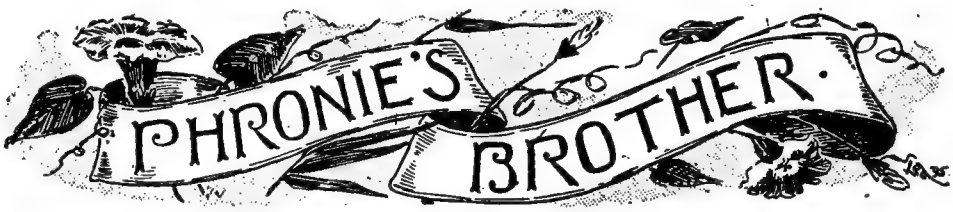
"Nothing is anything to me except—you know what. You remember what you said the other night. Well, I know that man. Now, if I show strength enough to win that miserly skinflint from his plans, will you reconsider? No threats; no money; upon my honour. Just my will against his. Please give me just that chance. Edith, you know how much I love you. Edith, please. Speed! Then I'll write to-night," and he caught her hand and kissed it and rushed away.

All that night he argued with the other man, and he praised him and patted him on the back, and smiled upon him. And he talked to his pipe and his pictures, and smiled on them too.

Then he wrote to the lawyer and told him to kick the agent, and to renew the old lease.

"My Darling Girl,—I have seen the dog of a miser and won you both. I told him a good deal about you, and he was so interested in you that he gave me his picture to send. Here it is. I am coming to-morrow. God bless you, dearest.

"Jack."



The Rev. Dr. Britton and myself sat in a cosy room in the Bachelors' Club. He was an ecclesiastic of the century end, a man whose ministrations had endeared him to many a household, but not averse to the gifts of the gods. So, as the last flame of the cognac died away, and we lighted our first cigars, he pointed out of the window to an unpretentious row of flats diagonally across the street.

"Notice the middle flat of the third house from the corner," he said.

I saw that it was just like the others, rather plain and unassuming, but with a suggestion of cosy curtains at the windows, said cosy appearance enhanced by the firelight that shone from within. "I don't see anything remarkable about it," I answered.

"Well, I dined there last Christmas under the most peculiar circumstances."

The minister smiled a little sadly as he said this, and resumed:

"Among my charges was a little blind boy who lives in that flat over there. He was wonderfully precocious. The blindness was not congenital, and he had learned to read and write like other boys until the great affliction had come upon him. Then he had mastered the language of the blind, and had read all that has been translated into those wonderful raised letters.

"They called him 'Phronie's brother.' Phronie was his sister, his constant companion and helper. So he had announced himself as Phronie's brother, in curious self-abnegation, and the name had clung to him.

"He was little, and pale, and thin, and his hair was as red as sunset. He knew all the neighbours and the neighbours' wives and children, but no one had ever heard him utter a word that was harsh, or not all good and pure. Then the history of the blind. He knew Milton's sonnet on his blindness by heart. He knew the stories of Homer's lack of sight. He knew all about the sad history of the sightless from the time the world began. And he had the words for blind in every language looked up, and stored up in his memory.

"But, thus shrouded in everlasting and impenetrable darkness, across his vision flashed many a glorious spectacle, and the dreams he had would astonish you or me. Often he used to come to me with his fancies, and I encouraged him in them, for I saw what pleasure they gave him.

"So he was not unhappy until, as he grew to be fourteen or fifteen years old, the boys of his acquaintance began to leave school and go to work to help in the support of their respective households. This made him miserable. Not that there was any real need of his assistance; his mother had a little property which was sufficient for their maintenance, with economy. But the thought that he could not do anything useful worried the poor little fellow. Of course his condition aggravated this, until finally it came to be the passion of his life to find something that he could do for his own support.

"One day he came to me in tears, telling me that one of the boys in the neighbourhood, who had just gone to work in a shop, had taunted him with his helpless condition, and had contrasted his strength with the blind lad's weakness. I was rather surprised at this, for every one was usually kind enough to the poor boy.

"But seeing his abject misery, and wishing to give him employment of some kind, I suggested that he should try to put some of his fancies into verse. He caught at the suggestion eagerly.

"'But will it bring me in any money?' he asked.

"I was unwilling to encourage him with any hopes that were likely to be dashed to the ground, but I reflected that his precocity was such that he might be able to produce something that would sell. So, improbable as it seemed, I answered:

"'Papers and magazines sometimes pay for such works. Of course, you will have to try very hard, and not be easily satisfied with your own efforts. And even if you fail many times you must not be discouraged.'

"It was not long before I perceived that I had made a great mistake. He threw his whole soul into the labour of composition. In spite of the protestations, and even direct commands, of his mother and sister, he would work all day sometimes, and far into the night. As I have said, he had learned to write, but, of course, his sister copied it all for him with loving pains.

"It happened that I was away for nearly a month at this time, and about the first visitors I had upon my return were Phronie and Phronie's brother. The boy was positively

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aglow with happiness, but there was a curious sadness in the girl's face that I did not comprehend. The poor little fellow said he had come to leave his manuscript with me for my criticism.

"It was a very long poem, some 8,000 words, I think. It was a sort of romance, or legend, having its scene in South America. Where in the world he got the idea of it I am sure I cannot think. Some of the verses were smooth, but no more, and there were several pleasant fancies in it, but I plainly saw that it would stand no chance in the world of ever getting into print.

"It was in the evening of the following day, while I was deliberating whether or not I should tell the poor boy that his work could not be used, that Phronie was announced. She was shown into my study, and her first question was about the poem. I told her what I thought.

"'It is just what I was sure of,' she replied sadly. 'I have felt as I copied it for him that it would never do. But how can I tell him? I am sure it will be the death of the poor boy. He has put his whole life into it, and he talks and thinks of nothing else.'

"'There is no use,' I replied, 'of sending it to any publication, for it is certain to be rejected.'

"'I have been thinking,' the girl replied, 'that it might be possible to make him think it had been published.'

"I did not comprehend at first all that she meant by this, nor did I understand the look of strange agony with which the words were accompanied.

"'I don't see how you are going to do that,' I answered. 'Would you tell him a deliberate falsehood?'

"A look as though of physical suffering passed over her face. She raised one hand to her forehead and lowered her eyes.

"'I would do that even,' she said, 'to save him such suffering. I have thought over it a long time, and I must do it. I will tell him that it has been printed.'

"'But do you understand what this means?' I cried. 'You will have to live up to the lie you have told. He will demand the paper, and will make you read it to him. He will ask how much he has been paid for it. Do you not realise that one such falsehood will involve you in a tissue of lies?'

"'I realise all that,' she replied, calmly now, and even smiling a little. 'I have thought of all the method of procedure, and I think I can live up to it.'

"After she was gone I sat in wonder and amazement for some time. I knew—who better than I, her pastor?—how much she loved truth, and hated even the appearance of a lie. And thus to voluntarily enter into a series of falsehoods for the sake of saving her brother pain was a sacrifice I could scarcely imagine. I suppose it was my duty to advise her to tell him the truth, but for the life of me I could not.

"It was four or five weeks before I saw either of them again. One day I stopped at the house. The sister was away from home, but the blind boy rushed to meet me with an expression of most perfect joy on his face.

"'You know my poem has been accepted,' he cried. 'We received the letter this morning. Phronie read it to me. They are going to pay me 30s. for it. That isn't much, but you know Milton only got £30 for "Paradise Lost."'

"My heart was very sad at the little fellow's eagerness, and even more as I thought what the falsehood must have cost his sister. Yet I pretended to be glad at his good fortune, and asked him what he would do with the money.

"'Oh, if it is published before Christmas I am going to spend some for a present for Phronie, and the rest shall go for a great Christmas dinner, and you must come and eat it with us.'

"I assured him that I would be present, and hurried away. About two weeks later he came to my rooms, accompanied by his devoted sister. He held a copy of a well-known weekly paper in his hand, which he flourished triumphantly.

"'It's published!' he almost shrieked. 'Here it is! Look at it! But no, you shall not see it. Phronie shall read it to you.'

"Then the martyr sister took the paper. She cast an appealing glance at me, and commenced in a voice that did not tremble or falter in the least, to read, or pretend to read, that long poem. I stared at her in amazement. Was it possible that she had induced a publisher to accept that childish poem? Not at all. She had learned it by heart and was pretending to read it aloud.

"To see the eager attention with which Phronie's brother drank in every word was touching in the extreme. He sat well forward in the chair, keeping time with his little body to the measure of the voice, and every now and then nodding his head as some familiar and beloved passage fell from the lips of his sister. Then as she finished he cried:

"'Only one thing is lacking to my happiness now. Oh, if I could only see how it looks in print.'

"At these words the overwrought feelings of the sister could stand it no longer, and she burst into a passion of tears.

"'Phronie, dear Phronie,' the boy said, going to her and putting his arms about her neck. 'Do not cry for me. I did not mean to complain, indeed I did not. I am perfectly happy as it is.'

"Little by little she controlled herself, and as they went away I gave them my promise to be present at their Christmas dinner. On the afternoon of that day I went to the middle flat of the third house from the corner. There were wreaths of evergreen and holly berries in the windows, and the bright fire shone merrily in the little front parlour. The blind boy was almost deliriously happy, and even the sister's face reflected some of his joy. I believe she had become so used to the deception that she had almost begun to believe in it herself. Then when we went to the table! 'Do you see the big turkey?' Phronie's brother cried. 'Isn't he a monster, and doesn't he smell appetising, though! And to think that I bought him with the money that I earned! Could I do more, even if I could see to work in the iron foundry?'

"I looked at the sister's face. It was calm, serene, even happy. I thought then, and think now, that there are lies and lies."

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THE STONECUTTER

HERE was once in Japan—at a time so remote that wise men hardly dare to speak of it—a poor little stonebreaker, who was employed upon the highways.

"Oh, how I would thank heaven," said he, "if I could one day be but rich enough to sleep the whole morning through and eat and drink my fill. It is said there exist people, blessed by fortune, who thus live in ease and comfort. Stretched upon thick mats before my door, my back covered with soft vestments of silk, I would make a siesta to be broken every quarter of an hour by a servitor, who should continually remind me that I had nothing to do, and that I could sleep without remorse."

An angel, passing, heard these words and smiled. "Thy prayer be granted, poor man," said he.

And suddenly the stonebreaker, enveloped in sumptuous vestments of silk, found himself stretched upon some thick mats, before the door of a splendid dwelling. He was no longer hungry or thirsty, no longer tired, and all this appeared to him as agreeable as it was surprising.

He tasted during a half hour unknown happiness, when the Mikado chanced to pass. The Mikado! That was no small matter—no! The Mikado is the Emperor of Japan, and the Emperor of Japan was, at that time above all, the most powerful of the emperors of the Orient.

The Mikado reposed upon eider-down in a palanquin of fine gold, studded with precious stones. His prime minister had the unparalleled honour of holding above his head a great tinkling parasol all fringed with little bells.

The enriched stonebreaker followed with an envious eye the imperial *cortège*.

"I haven't gained much," he said to himself. "I am not much happier for the few paltry pleasures I am enabled to give myself. Oh, that I were the Mikado! I would travel in grand state, lolling in a golden palanquin blazing with precious stones, attended by my prime minister holding a great glittering parasol over me, while my second minister would cool my face with a fan made of peacock's feathers. Oh, that I could be the Mikado!"

"Thy wish is granted," said the angel.

And immediately he saw himself stretched in the palanquin of fine gold, starred with precious stones, and surrounded by his ministers, his warriors, his women, and his slaves, who said to him:

"Mikado, thou art superior to the sun; thou art eternal; thou art invincible. All that the spirit of man can conceive thou canst execute. Justice itself is subordinate to thy will; and the gods, trembling, await thy counsels."

And the stonebreaker said to himself, "Ah! happy day! now here are people who know my value."

The sun, which had been very fierce for some days, had parched the country. The route was dusty, and his glare fatigued the eyes of the newly made Mikado.

Addressing his minister who carried the parasol, he said:

"Make known to the sun that he troubles me. His familiarities displease me. Say to him that the grand Emperor of Japan commands him to retire. Go!"

The prime minister confided to a chamberlain the honour of carrying the tinkling parasol and went away.

He returned presently with the greatest consternation written in his face.

"Great Emperor! sovereign of the gods and of men! It is past comprehension—the sun pretends not to hear, and continues to shine on the road."

"Let him be punished."

"Certainly! His insolence merits it—but how shall I get at him to administer the punishment?"

"I am the equal of the gods—is it not so?"

"Assuredly, great Mikado—the equal to say the least."

"You told me but a moment since that nothing was impossible to me. You have lied to me—you have disobeyed me, or you have badly executed my orders. I give you five minutes in which to put out the sun. Go!"

The prime minister went away, but did not return.

The imperial stonebreaker was purple with rage.

"Upon my word! This is a fine position—this of emperor, when one is obliged to submit to the familiarities, the caprices, the brutalities of a moving planet. It is no use to deny it, the sun is more powerful than I. I would like to be the sun."

"Thou art the sun," said the angel.

And the little stonebreaker shone in the high heavens, all radiant, all flaming. He took pleasure in scorching up the trees, in drying up the rivers and the springs, and in covering with sweat the august visages of emperors, no less than the dusty noses of the stonebreakers, his colleagues of the morning.

But a cloud came between the earth and him, and said:

"Halt there, my dear. No one can pass."

"By the moon! this is a little too much. A cloud, a poor little cloud without form, calls me 'my dear,' and bars the way! Clouds are more powerful than I. I will be a cloud or I shall burst with jealousy."

"Do not burst for so little," said the angel, always in attendance, "be a cloud, since thou wishest it." And the new cloud rested proudly, in his turn, between the earth and the resplendent sun.

Never in the memory of man had there fallen such showers. The transformed stonebreaker took pleasure in pouring hail and rain upon the earth in a fashion so terrible that trees fell down, finding only mud in which to fasten their roots.

A rock meanwhile held up his head in the storm. In face of all he remained impassive.

"I am at my wits' end!" said the cloud. "This rock ignores my power. He resists me and I envy him."

Said the angel, "Take his place, and let us see if thou wilt at last be satisfied."

The transformed cloud at length felt at ease. Impervious, inaccessible, impassive, under the burning caresses of the sun and under the fury of the thunder he believed himself master of the world.

But, lo! at his feet a little soft hammering drew his attention. He leaned over, and saw a poor creature covered with rags—thin and pale as he himself had been in the time of his greatest misery—who, with a mallet in hand, chipped the granite into pieces to repair the neighbouring roadway.

"What is this?" said the superb rock. "A poor wretch—miserable among the most miserable—mutilates me, and I cannot defend myself! I am profoundly humiliated. I am reduced to envying the state of this creature."

"Take his place," said the angel smiling.

And the insatiable personage became that which he was before—a poor little breaker of stones.

He was always half dead from hunger, and three quarters dead from fatigue—all of which did not hinder him from being perfectly contented with his lot.

We regret to say that the story which appeared in the issue of this paper dated January 26th, entitled "The Blue Letter," appeared originally in the "Family Herald," and is the copyright property of the proprietors of that paper. Had we been aware of this, it would not have been inserted.

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Should Stout Persons STARVE THEMSELVES?

We are afraid that semi-starvation as a cure for corpulency prevails very much to a dangerous degree. Mr. Archer, the late well-known prominent jockey, was in the habit of going without food for a long stretch in order that he could ride a certain horse at its weight, and there is not much doubt that the debility resulting from this habit of abstemiousness was certainly not conducive to combating the dire attack of fever, which was, perhaps, indirectly responsible for the untimely end, in the zenith of his fame, of this unfortunate but accomplished horseman. Even Mary Jane in the kitchen will eat sparingly of the food allowed her, while she will seek to reduce her fat by copious draughts from the vinegar cruet, and succeed only in injuring the coats of her stomach—the forerunner of dyspeptic troubles which will be difficult to overcome.

The Continental medicos seem to advocate this great reduction of ordinary foods, but one of these savants suggests that the stout person should eat considerably of fatty meats, in order that the appetite is appeased, and consequently less food required, so that practically this is indirectly advocating semi-starvation. On the other hand, Mr. Russell, the British specialist, take a different course. He says, "Eat as much as you like," and as it is an acknowledged fact that under his treatment persons lose from 2 lb. to 12 lb. per week, it beyond doubt stands out pre-eminent against those so-called starvation cures "made in Germany." Some claim that Mr. Russell has to insist upon his patients drinking hot water every morning, but on the contrary he avers that it is dangerous to do so, and has, of course, never advised it. No; the success of Mr. Russell's treatment is incomparably beyond other specialists, for he resorts to no stringent dietary, and simply prescribes a harmless vegetable tonic combination which is the outcome of years of study and botanical research. We advise all those interested in this question to get his book, the price of which is only 4d. It is entitled, "Corpulency and the Cure," 256 pp., and is published by him at Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square London, W.C. It can be had direct, or through any bookseller.—Extract from *The Million.*

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POSITIVE REMEDY

FOR

CORPULENCE

Any remedy that can be suggested as a cure or alleviation for stoutness will be heartily welcomed. We have recently received a well-written book, the author of which seems to know what he is talking about. It is entitled "Corpulency and the Cure," 256 pages, and is a cheap issue (only 4d.) published by Mr. F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C. Our space will not do justice to this book; send for it yourself. It appears that Mr. Russell has submitted all kinds of proofs to the English Press. The editor of the *Tablet*, the Catholic organ, writes:—"Mr. Russell does not give us the slightest loophole for a doubt as to the value of his cure, for, in the most straightforward and matter-of-fact manner, he submitted some hundreds of original and unsolicited testimonial letters for our perusal, and offered us plenty more, if required. To assist him to make this remedy known, we think we cannot do better than publish quotations from some of the letters submitted. The first one, a marchioness, writes from Madrid:—'My son, Count ——, has reduced his weight in twenty-two days 16 kilos—*i.e.*, 34 lbs.' Another writes:—'So far (six weeks from commencement of following your system) I have lost fully two stone in weight.' The next (a lady) writes:—'I am just half the size.' A fourth:—'I find it is successful in my case. I have lost 8 lbs. in weight since I commenced (two weeks).' Another writes: 'A reduction of 18 lbs. in a month is a great success.' A lady from Bournemouth writes:—'I feel much better, have less difficulty in breathing, and can walk about.' Again a lady says:—'It reduced me considerably, not only in the body, but all over.' The author is very positive. He says:—'Step on a weighing machine on Monday morning and and again on Tuesday, and I guarantee you have lost 2 lbs. in weight without the slightest harm, and vast improvement in health through ridding the system of unhealthy accumulations.'"—*Cork Herald.*

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"PUT YOUR SPARE TIME IN THE BANK."

DID you ever hear of the Australian Time Bank (Limited)? No? Well, then, you must know about it, and right away, too.

Mr. Anstey describes it. The idea is this. You don't use all your time to advantage. Most of it in fact runs to waste. You often have the time, but no chance to invest it profitably. So the time slides out of your possession just as spilled water soaks into the ground and is lost. Suppose you could put your useless time into a bank, as you do money, and draw it out on cheques as you want it. Do you see? Wouldn't that be what the Americans call "A big thing"?

"Bosh! Stuff! Humbug!" you say. "It is impossible. If we could do that we might bank time enough to turn us into boys and girls again."

True, so we might, but as you say, it can't be done. Yet, isn't there a moral in the idea? Open your eyes and read. The moral is plain as the trunk on an elephant. *If you can't get back your waste time, then don't waste it.*

Now, isn't a man wasting time when he gets ill? "Oh," you say, "but he can't help it." That's worse nonsense than the Time Bank. Yes, he can help it, nine times out of ten.

Look, for a second. Here's a man who goes on to talk like this: "There was never," he says, "a stronger man in England than I was up to December, 1884. I am a gamekeeper, and about this time we had a deal of trouble with a gang of poachers. I had to keep watch all night long, and was scarcely ever in bed, *and often slept in my damp clothes.* At last we nabbed the poachers and landed them in jail. Shortly after this I was taken bad. At first I merely felt tired and dull, I had a bad taste in the mouth with slime covering my tongue and teeth. I could eat little or nothing, and what I did eat gave me great pain. I felt as if held in a vice; my breathing was laboured and short, and I spat up a great deal of phlegm. I had a dreadful hacking cough, and could get no sleep at night; for after ten minutes' sleep I would wake up and cough for two or three hours at a spell. Night after night I heard the clock strike every hour.

"When the bad attacks came on I felt as if I should suffocate, and had to be bolstered up in bed. I was coughing and spitting up matter and phlegm all night long. Finally I got so weak I couldn't walk across the floor, and if I ventured out my breathing was so bad that I had to stop and rest every few yards. Of course I was obliged to give up my work, and for eight months I did nothing. I was under the doctor all this time, and from the first he said my case was a bad one. After a while he said to my wife, '*Your husband is in a consumption, and will never get better.*'

"I thought it was all over with me, and every one who saw me thought I would die. About this time I read in a Liverpool paper of a medicine called Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup, and fancied I should like to try it. So my son, who lives in Liverpool, got me two bottles, and before I had used up the second one my cough was all gone, my breathing was easy, and I could eat anything. I soon got back to my work, and have enjoyed good sound health ever since. When I began taking the Syrup I was so low I don't believe I could have held out much longer. I have lived all my life in this district, and in my present house forty years.

(Signed) "THOMAS BATEMAN,
"Marbury Locks,
"Near Whitchurch, Salop.
"March 23rd, 1891."

What are we to learn from Mr. Bateman's experience? First, that he had no real consumption. His cough and the spitting up of matter were symptoms of a thoroughly disordered condition of the digestive organs, brought on by exposure, loss of rest, and the breaking up of all his regular habits of life. This resulted from his outlying for the poachers and his foolish sleeping in his damp clothes. Acute indigestion and dyspepsia followed, of course, with all the suffering which he details so well. But was the illness his fault? We do not say it was his fault, for maybe his occupation compelled him to take such risks, but where there is one case of this kind there are a hundred in which the evil might have been averted.

We conclude then that prevention is better than cure, but when a cure must be sought, the successful and trustworthy remedy is Mother Seigel's Syrup.

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